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A VISIT TO THE FRANKFORT *MUSTERSCHULE*¹

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I was fortunate in being allowed to visit the *Musterschule*, a *Realgymnasium* at Frankfurt am Main, when I arrived there in the early part of September, 1910, without going through the endless amount of red tape usually necessary to secure official permission. I had only two days to visit the school and attended ten classes in that time, giving my time in the order of amount to French, English, German, and Latin. Perhaps by taking up the French first I can give a better idea of continuity in any subject taught in the school. French is taught in all of the nine classes of this *Realgymnasium*; beginning with the lowest class, the *Sexta*, the classes per week run as follows: *Sexta*, 6; *Quinta*, 6; *Quarta*, 6; *Untertertia*, 4; *Obertertia*, 4; *Untersekunda*, 3; *Obersekunda*, 3; *Unterprima*, 3; and *Oberprima*, 3. It is the policy of the school to have the same man carry a certain class through the *Gymnasium*; a man starts a class in French in *Sexta*—he carries the work through *Quinta*, *Quarta*, *Untertertia*, etc., through the school. The boys in any class are held accountable for work done in former classes—they are required to know just where in their course they have had a certain bit of work.

Let us begin with the work of the first class in French—*Sexta*. It meets six times a week, the lessons being 45 minutes in length, and is conducted this year by Dr. Lorey, a pupil of the well-known phonetician Vietor of Marburg. He has taught in England also and has served his *Probejahr* at the *Musterschule* in 1908-9. He is a great drillmaster and exacts the closest attention in class and the greatest neatness in the writ-

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ten work done at home. Any inattention in class calls forth sharp reproof and any slovenliness in the written work means rewriting. The class has had French since Easter of this year. The particular lesson I heard was on "La petite souris," a little story of eight or ten lines. The boys, who are about nine years of age, were kept on the jump racing to the platform in front and speaking it from memory. The greatest care was given to pronunciation. They spoke loudly and clearly, fairly shouting in their enthusiasm. Any indistinctness usually called forth a thundering, "Open your mouth." This part of the work, besides developing the memory, really amounted to voice culture. The teacher is a trained phonetician, has a rich, strong voice himself, and is doing wonderful elocutionary work. While the boys in turn spoke their pieces as described, two or three others were required to write the story on the blackboard from memory.

Then a most careful discussion of the sounds began. The word *souris*, e.g., started a drill on voiceless *s*. All the words the pupils could think of illustrating the sound of voiceless *s* were given. Then one boy was called upon to give the rule on the pronunciation of voiceless *s*. Another was sent to the large phonetic chart on the wall and asked to analyze words phonetically, pointing out the characters that represented nasalized, voiced, and voiceless sounds. The word *viens* in *je viens* started a discussion of nasalized *ẽ*—a boy was sent to the board to write from memory all the words he knew that contained the *ẽ* of *veins*—e.g., *impossible*, *fin*, *plein*, *faim*, *soin*, etc. The word *embrasser* called forth another boy for a list of words with the nasalized *ã* sound, e.g., *embrasser*, *plante*, *champ*, *dent*, *temps*, *la lampe*, etc. After this careful drill in phonetics came the drill in grammar and vocabulary. I might emphasize here that in all this drill the sentence forms the basis—better still related sentences. The story was gone over carefully by question and answer; a series of questions was asked that required the answer in the subject form; another that required the object form—this was intended to teach the boys the meaning of subject and object. Then many varied questions were asked to train the ear

to a quick understanding of the spoken word. It was surprising to see with what accuracy and quickness the pupils caught the sentences.

To increase the interest in and the effectiveness of the drill the pupils were required to form questions extemporaneously on the text and to call upon any member of the class for the answer. This was like playing a game, and the boys were almost gluttonous in their eagerness to answer. There were moments for fun and amusement to interrupt the seriousness of the class recitation. The teacher reproved the boys in fun, joked with them, told them to stretch their legs, to take a deep breath, and to sit up straight, for it would be impossible to keep up the tense attention for the whole hour. Besides, the teachers at the *Musterschule* are anxious that their reform methods be not misinterpreted; they do not wish them to appear mechanical; they say they are anything but mechanical; they want everything to be just natural, interesting, practical, and they want to develop the minds of the boys in the matter of memory, imagination, and *Gemüt*. They do not want them to be slaves to the textbook and dictionary, but they want them to become strong and independent in mind. There is the best of good feeling between teacher and pupil and the whole method is an excellent illustration of the old saying, "Work while you work and play while you play."

Before the close of this first class, selections of prose and poetry learned in previous lessons were repeated from memory and striking words and phrases given at random by the instructor were given their setting by the pupils. One or two easy French songs were sung also. The knowledge of French that these boys had acquired since Easter of this year was simply surprising.

The next class in order which I visited was Direktor Walter's Quarta in French. The class has had approximately two and a half years of instruction of six hours a week, in the language. The reading that day consisted of a piece of prose which the pupils in turn had to recite from memory. Then followed a drill on vocabulary, by complete sentences, to train

ear and memory. Types of sentences like "Il faut que" and questions like "Faut-il que" were used to fix the grammar in mind. Any one point was brought out by the use of many illustrations from the present and former lessons, or the class was called upon to supply expressions from former lessons that illustrated the particular point in question. This usually proved easy, showing how well the previous lessons had been mastered. All of the drill was in French, and Dr. Walter explained after class that explanations in German were permitted only in cases where the boy's knowledge of the French idiom was not sufficient to bring out the niceties of a phrase or passage.

A man of Dr. Walter's force and personality could, of course, arouse great enthusiasm. To keep the interest and attention at a high pitch was a main object in all of the classes. For the benefit of the visiting teachers—there were four that day—he gave samples of different kinds of work the class did. This part was, of course, extemporaneous. At the end of each bit he stopped and, addressing the teachers, added any explanation of method he thought necessary. He thus made it a sort of practice class that day.

One of the main features of all the work in all of the classes is the effort made at developing the powers of observation and imagination in the pupil. The boys in this class were told to do certain things and then asked to describe minutely their actions; e.g., one boy was told to pick up a piece of paper and put it into the waste-basket. He would say in French: "I arise"; "I walk forward"; "I stoop to pick up a piece of paper"; "I put it into the waste-basket"; "I turn about and walk back to my seat"; "I sit down." The class repeated, addressing the boy thus: "You arise"; "You walk forward"; "You pick up," etc. Another boy was sent out of the room for something. He related all his actions and the class repeated as before. This sort of practice can, of course, be made as varied and complicated as the teacher wishes, and yet remain intensely practical. Association and concentration, of course, play a leading part here in the acquisition of the language.

This was called "direkte Anschauung." But Dr. Walter

said, "One must learn also to imagine things as though real, for the imaginary may be reality some day—the imagination must be developed." Following out this idea, the boys were called upon to go through the motions of taking a train for some place: one was the conductor, another the station-gate keeper; one boy even was the baggage and was lifted quickly into an imaginary baggage rack overhead. The whole thing was said and done so quickly that the piece of baggage hardly knew what was going on. He was the disturbing element in the whole process. This was called "indirekte Anschauung."

One or two boys were called up for a dialogue. The director knew that one boy had had a trip during his recent vacation. The other boy was to draw out of him his experiences. The result was a bit of natural conversation.

Then followed a varied drill on vocabulary. A boy would give words from poems and selections read and then challenge another to tell where they occurred. The pupils could give the whole phrase or sentence usually.

Lists of words and phrases and their opposites were given—anything to associate and co-ordinate. Words were taken up by classes—nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives—striking expressions like "ripe peach," "sweet peach," "fragrant peach," "cold water," "clear water," "fresh water," "fat boy," "lazy boy," "hungry boy," etc.

Blackboard work again constituted an important part of the work of the class. A boy would write a story on the board while the rest went on with their drill; afterward the class made the necessary corrections and discussed them. Another wrote a letter on the board; still another described a picture given him, etc.

Then there was drill on the vocabulary of these blackboard selections: synonyms were called for; a certain phrase or sentence was given in four or five different ways. Sentence drill as described before—on subject, object, e.g.—was included also.

Direktor Walter's Unterprima, the next to the highest class, showed pretty well the method used. The class, reciting three

times a week, was reading a text on the French Revolution. A certain number of pages had been assigned and the boys were called upon to speak parts in turn from memory. The rest of the class, with the exception of three or four who were sent to the board to write selections from memory, were asked to grade the recitation on (1) pronunciation, (2) delivery, (3) grammar, (4) content. The corrections were made and the boy had to repeat each correction. The work at the board was gone over as before. One difference between the work of the upper and that of the lower classes was the increasing amount of sight work introduced; e. g., in this class the director read a new selection—"neuer Stoff." The boys listened closely and then retold it and answered questions. Or a short story in German was read to be given in French immediately. Or the pupils put questions to one another for answer.

In this Unterprima we saw sight work introduced more and more to give the boys power, to teach them independence from the printed page and the dictionary—to teach them readiness. The Oberprima, the highest class, gave an illustration of what the whole method strives for and accomplishes.

During the short morning intermission, when the whole school was eating its little bite of lunch or second breakfast, the visiting teachers being supplied with sandwiches by the *Schuldiener*, Direktor Walter requested me about five minutes before the beginning of his Oberprima in French to tell his boys a little story in English on any subject I wished. He said that I was to ask the class to retell the same immediately, first in English and then in French. I had seen enough of their methods to understand how to go about my task. This was clear before I thought of anything to tell. I realized that to make it easiest for the boys I had to find a little story that could be told in cue words, for they were what the boys would be listening for. I told them the little story of the besieging and taking of the town of Rothenburg o. d. Tauber by General Tilly in the Thirty Years' War, of Tilly's anger at the resistance of the town, of the final surrender of the latter, of his threat to raze the town and hang the council for

their long opposition, of his obstinacy in spite of the pleadings of the town council, of the clever trick of one of the maidens to get him to drink of some wine pledged to his health and which made him somewhat tipsy, and of how in his gay mood he promised to spare the town on the one condition that someone present empty a certain huge vessel of wine at one draught; of how the mayor accomplished the feat, fainted, but lived thirty-seven years afterward.

The boys could not be suppressed in their eagerness to retell. They did it wonderfully well, first in English and then (as nearly as I could tell) in French also. It was pleasing to see with what neatness ideas that were rather involved were repeated. I quizzed the class also on the vocabulary of the story, asking them in what connection certain words and expressions were used.

This class was quite ready to use the language in everyday life and a year or even less time in France or an English-speaking country would make good conversationalists out of them. The class closed with the singing of "God Save the King" and "Home, Sweet Home" in honor of the English and American visitors—the class standing.

I have given, I think, a faint idea of the general nature of the work done in French at the *Musterschule*. I should like to add a word of interest perhaps about an English and a Latin class which I visited also, which will throw additional light upon the methods pursued at the school.

The English class was the Untersekunda. This first-year class in English was reading the story of the Voyage of the Mayflower. There was discussion and paraphrasing of the text in English. Sentences were recast in three or four different ways. The work, I should say, was quite satisfactory, but the professor explained after class that he had not made adequate preparation for his lesson owing to a sick headache that had kept him awake all night. This showed that the instructor prepares his lessons carefully so that in his classroom the work may be conducted most effectively.

This lesson on the Voyage of the Mayflower brought up also

the subject of the Church of England, the Calvinistic movement, and other related topics. It was the aim of the teacher to get at the spirit of the time that brought about the voyage, its historical setting and religious significance, rather than to have the boys learn only a few new words and bare facts.

In the Latin class I saw the best example of the fun that is introduced into all classes to interrupt the seriousness of the work. Professor Bernhard was conducting his *Untersekunda* in Caesar. It was drill, drill, drill. It seemed that about a third of the class were former pupils of other *Gymnasias*, and when one of these boys failed in his recitation the teacher asked all who came from these other schools to rise, and then he explained that they were the ones who made life a burden to him, that they were casting reflections upon his work—hinting, of course, at the poor preparation they had had at the other schools. Another boy made a star recitation. A sentence in colloquial German was given which in Latin was an illustration of a very difficult construction and a volunteer was called for. One boy sprang to his feet and reeled it off with wonderful accuracy. The teacher called him up, shook his hand, patted him on the back, and shouted, “Good for you! [in German, of course]. That’s a teacher’s reward for his efforts; that’s what brings glad moments into his life.”

Another boy missed a question. Jokingly he was asked where he had had his oyster supper the night before. The boy laughed, the teacher laughed. In the vocabulary drill the adjective *conditus* came up. Related words were called for. The word *Konditor* was given. Turning to a boy named Cohn the professor said, “I suppose you think it comes from *Cohn* and *ditor*, but oh no!” Then suddenly everybody was asked to raise one leg, then both.

Professor Bernhard could joke with the boys in this way, because he could also be most serious.

Of course, this sort of thing illustrated clearly how much of the success of the methods of the schools depends upon the personality of the teachers. Professor Bernhard is a combination of the stern, strong type of man, and the kind,

gentle type. Let another man imitate him and he will most likely fail. A passage in the Caesar lesson spoke of the moral purity of the German-barbarian youth, and by comparison Professor Bernhard spoke of the wickedness with which, alas, too many of the modern youth were acquainted. He treated what we in our false modesty would call a delicate subject, with a directness, frankness, naturalness, and simplicity that was impressive, drawing from it a valuable moral lesson for these Frankfort youths, which all young people should know. It was the best treatment of a thing of this nature that I have ever seen, and it showed the big personality of the man.

In conclusion, I should like to recount briefly a few of the striking features of the work conducted at the *Musterschule*, a few of the things that even one visit to a single class brings to one's notice strikingly.

1. The teachers are well trained and thoroughly equipped. All of the regular teachers except the teachers of gymnastics, drawing, and like subjects have the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. About ten out of fifteen of these have the title of professor. I have cited the example of Mr. Lorey who was a student of phonetics under Vietor, has spent some time teaching in England, has served his *Probejahr* at the *Musterschule*, and has been a regular teacher for only about a year, although I should say he is a man over thirty years of age.

2. Being a well-trained man, the teacher at the *Musterschule* maps out his work carefully and logically. He works on a single definite point or principle at a time; he explains to his pupils just what he is going to undertake, just what he wants them to do, what he wishes them to accomplish next. He has prepared himself to present his task clearly; the pupil sees what the teacher is driving at; there is perfect understanding between the two.

3. One sees that patient repetition leads to mastery, repetition that gives the pupil ample opportunity of using in a practical way both the principles of grammar and the vocabulary; furthermore, repetition intended to develop the boy's powers of thinking and observation.

4. Absolute attention in class is demanded. Work stops the moment there is any inattention.

5. The teacher is enthusiastic and versatile, but he does not allow his versatility to scatter his strength and effort at random over the whole field of his subject, which would lead only to confusion and vagueness.

6. It is very evident that this concentration of effort yields wonderful results.

7. The boys are doing more than learning a lot of facts. They learn to co-ordinate the knowledge they gain in their lessons from day to day, from year to year, so that their store of learning becomes of practical use to them. The Mayflower lesson referred to above will illustrate what I mean. The pupils are taught to understand the character of the people whose language they are learning.

Lastly, the enthusiasm displayed by the boys in all of the classes is wonderful; the class work runs on like a well-oiled machine. Above all it appears clearly that early youth is the best time for the learning of a foreign language.

I have reported on a school where conditions for instruction not only in the modern languages, but in all branches, are ideal. The school stands for most modern, progressive methods in education. To be sure, the conditions I have described are those suited to the German youth. Naturally we must not expect that they would be entirely suitable for our American youth. Yet they cannot fail to invite comparison with conditions existing in our American schools. In America the modern languages have not yet obtained equal recognition with other subjects. Consequently the teaching efficiency in them is not nearly so great. In the *Musterschule* each man is a trained specialist in his subjects. In our high schools too often French and German are treated as left-over courses to be taught by those teachers whose programs are least heavily overburdened. The courses being elementary, the mistaken notion too often prevails that anybody can teach them anyway. Is it surprising, then, that there is lack of interest for the subject on the part of the pupils and lack of efficiency on the part of the teacher?

In consideration of these things I should like, for the purpose of inviting discussion, to put the following questions:

1. What can be done to impress upon boards of education and teachers themselves the need of greater recognition of these languages in the high school, and also the need of greater efficiency in the teaching of them? One argument would be that the high-school age of the boy and girl is a far better time for acquiring the elements of a new language than the college age.

2. How can this greater efficiency be attained? Should not every teacher of any modern foreign language possess, in addition to a sound knowledge of the grammar of that language, an excellent pronunciation, a good appreciation of the spirit of the language and the people that speak it, and sufficient fluency in conversation to enable him to give that varied drill that leads the pupil to independence from the printed page and the dictionary and gives him a real, exact, and handy knowledge?

Should not school boards exact these things from teachers and in return raise their salaries and the dignity of their positions, placing them certainly on an equal footing with the Latin teachers?